

Surviving Discrimination: Examining the Prevalence of Aversive Racism and Sexism in the T.V. Series *Survivor*

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Introduction

Aversive Racism & Sexism

- Discrimination toward minority group members (race and sex) occurring in subtle, rationalizable ways (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).
 - e.g., in situations that lack norms to guide non-biased behavior and when biased behavior can be attributed to non-racial or sex factors.
- Aversive racists and sexists genuinely believe in equality, and deny race or sex playing a role in their biased or discriminatory behavior.

Survivor

- Reality television show where 16-20 people compete for \$1 million dollars while marooned on an island for 1-39 days, competing in challenges as tribes and after merging tribes, as individuals.
- Winning tribe(s) or individuals are safe from elimination, while losing tribes vote a member of their tribe, or another individual out of the game.
- A jury composed of eliminated contestants then vote on who, among the final 2 or 3 contestants, will win \$1 million.

Present Research

Data from seasons 1-38 was collected for a total of 673 contestants. Data was excluded from Season 13, which separated tribes by race, leaving a total of 37 seasons and 653 people in the analyses.

Contestant Demographics

- 50% male, 50% female
- 76.6% White, 23.4% not-white

Present Research

Examine whether, compared to white male contestants, female & non-white contestants were:

- more likely to be voted out earlier in the game
- less likely to make it to the merge
- less likely to be among the finalists
- less likely to win \$1 million

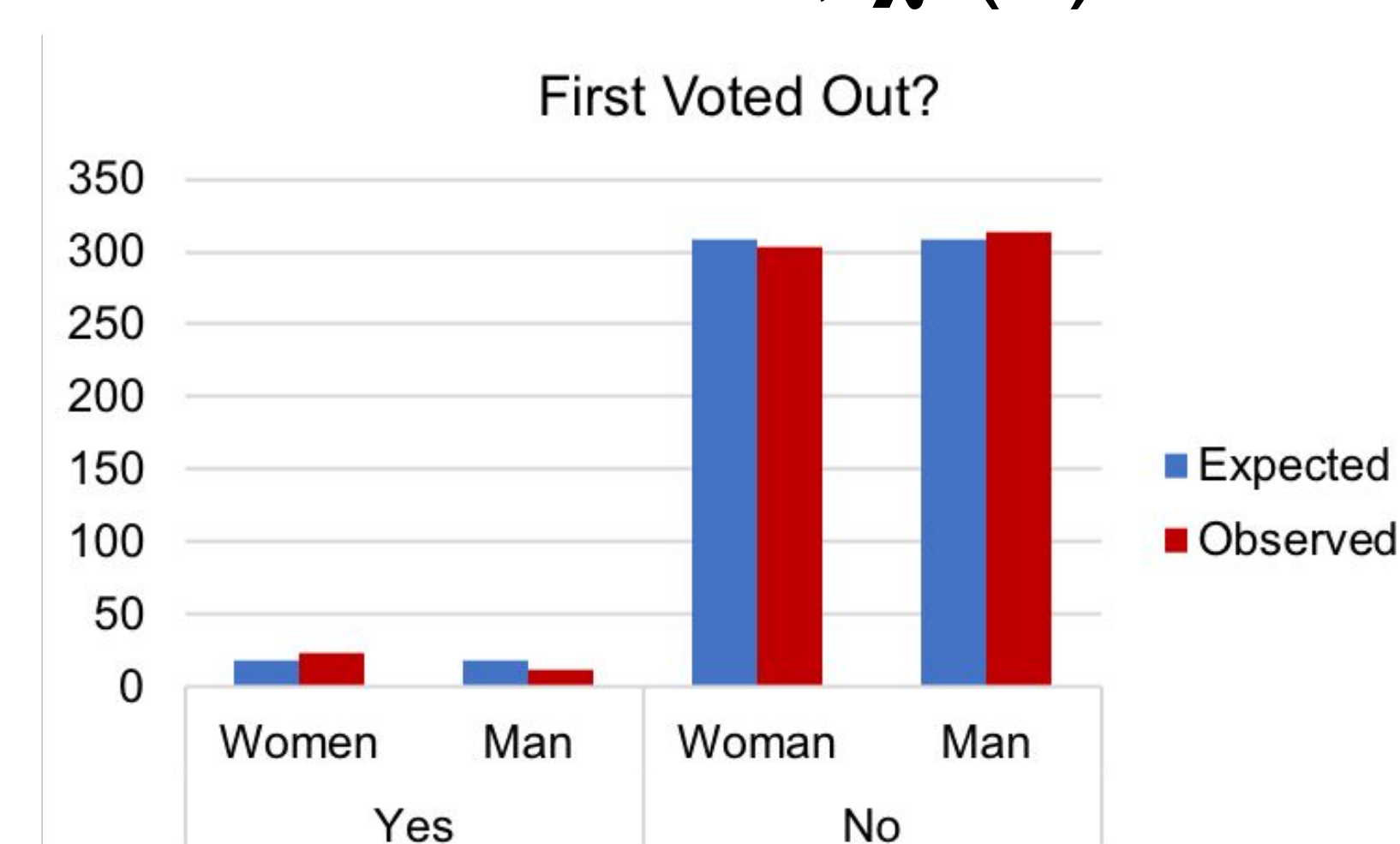
Analysis

We conducted Chi-Square tests and compared the observed frequencies across 37 seasons to the expected frequencies given the proportion of each group in the sample.

Results

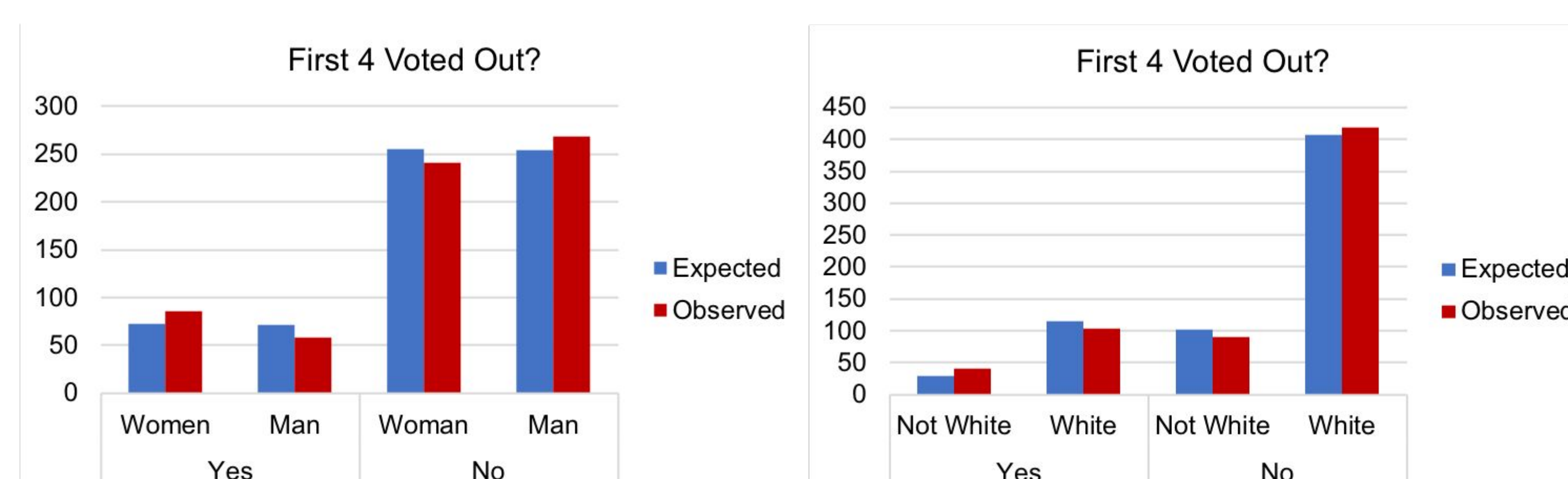
Voted out First

- Women are first voted out of the game at a higher than expected rate value, $\chi^2(1) = 4.20$, $p = .04$.



Voted out Early in the Game

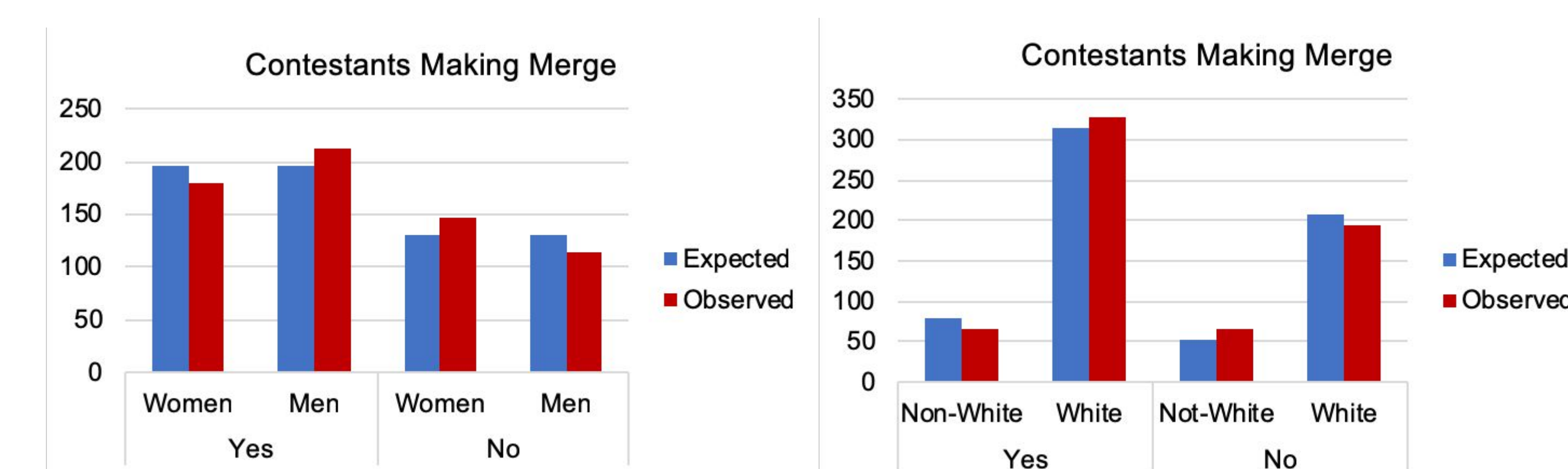
- Women and non-white contestants are more likely to be among the first four contestants voted out, $\chi^2(1) = 6.88$, $p = .01$, $\chi^2(1) = 6.86$, $p = .01$, respectively.



Results

Making the Merge

- Compared to the expected outcome, women and non-white contestants are less likely to make the merge, $\chi^2(1) = 6.78$, $p = .01$, $\chi^2(1) = 7.41$, $p = .01$, respectively.



Likelihood of being a Finalist & Winning

- We observed no sex or race bias regarding the likelihood of being one of the finalists or winning.

Discussion

- The present research found evidence consistent with aversive racism and sexism in the pattern of voting on the television series, *Survivor*.
- Survivor contestants can utilize a number of strategies to try to win the game, particularly when competing as a tribe, providing non-racial and non-sex related reasons for how fellow-castaways are voted out.
- Pre-merge, when contestants have to work as a team to remain in the game, non-white and female contestants are more likely to be voted out.
- Bias disappears when contestants are able to protect themselves from being voted out with individual immunity after the merge.